09.27.13 | VOL. 4, ISSUE 15 | SPEAKING OUT

GA VOICE

QFILM

LGBT Film Fest boasts a week of features, shorts, documentaries and more

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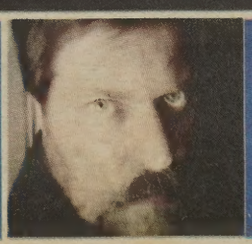
Comic genius
Laugh your ass off with Wanda Sykes. **Page 6**



Queer sounds
Music for LGBT History Month . **Page 18**

Say, 'I do'
Ga. Dem Chair Dubose Parker says yes to gay nups. **Page 13**

Atlanta's LGBT Film Festival

Celebrating Pride at the Movies

OUT ON FILM ★ 26th Season ★ OUT ON FILM

What is Out on Film?
Out on Film is Atlanta's own LGBT film festival. We're in our 26th season. Out on Film was created in 1987 to inform, entertain, educate and enrich the regional LGBT community by recognizing the creative work of LGBT artists and professionals.

Where is the event?
The majority of films are shown at the Landmark Midtown Art Cinema, 931 Monroe Drive, Atlanta GA 30308.

How do I buy tickets?
Tickets can be purchased at www.outonfilm.org, the Landmark theater, and online at the Landmark's website. Please visit www.outonfilm.org for ticket information.

Are there other activities?
Yes. Out on Film schedules opening and closing night parties plus events before and after select films, including Q&As with filmmakers.

How can I learn more?
www.outonfilm.org has details about films and schedules, trailers, special events, volunteering, and more FAQs.

Out On Film Lounge
Sponsored by Absolut and Après Diem, the "26 Lounge" is the perfect location to relax between films and to meet our filmmakers!

OUT ON FILM

October 3 - 10, 2013
Landmark Midtown Art Cinema

outonfilm.org

Film Schedule At A Glance

Tuesday, October 1
- **7:00 pm** Valentine Road
  Gay Documentary @ Rush Center

Thursday, October 3
- **7:00 pm** G.B.F.
  Gay Comedy
- **9:15 pm** I Always Said Yes: The Many Lives of Wakefield Poole - Gay Documentary

Friday, October 4
- **3:30 pm** The Campaign *Just Added!*
  Gay Lesbian Documentary
- **5:20 pm** Geography Club
  Gay Lesbian Comedy Drama
- **7:05 pm** Breaking The Girls
  Lesbian Romantic Drama
- **9:05 pm** Hot Guys With Guns
  Gay Drama
- **11:15 pm** I'm A Porn Star *Just Added!*
  Gay Documentary
- **11:20 pm** Solo
  Gay Romantic Drama (Argentina)

Saturday, October 5
- **11:00 am** Margarita
  Lesbian Romantic Drama (Canada)
- **11:20 am** Pitstop
  Gay Romantic Drama
- **12:45 pm** Women's Shorts
  Lesbian Various
- **1:00 pm** The Rugby Player
  Gay Documentary
- **3:00 pm** Men's Shorts
  Gay Various
- **5:00 pm** Breaking Through
  Gay Lesbian Documentary
- **7:05 pm** I Am Divine
  Gay Documentary
- **9:10 pm** Getting The Go: The Go Doc Project
  Gay Romantic Drama
- **11:20 pm** Truth
  Gay Romantic Drama

Sunday, October 6
- **11:00 am** Tell No One
  Gay Romantic Comedy (Italy)
- **11:00 am** Gore Vidal - The United States of Amnesia - Gay Documentary
- **12:40 pm** F to 7th - Lesbian Comedy *FREE MOVIE*
- **12:45 pm** Before You Know It
  Gay Documentary
- **3:10 pm** Melting Away
  Trans Drama (Israel)
- **5:00 pm** Test - Gay Drama
- **6:45 pm** Birthday Cake - Gay Comedy
- **8:50 pm** Hawaii
  Gay Romantic Drama (Argentina)

Monday, October 7
- **4:00 pm** Intersexion - Transgender Documentary
- **5:40 pm** Lesbiana - A Parallel Revolution
  Lesbian Documentary (French Canadian)
- **6:30 pm** The Blacks of Their Eyes
  Gay Documentary
- **7:00 pm** Who's Afraid of Vagina Wolf
  Lesbian Romantic Comedy
- **7:25 pm** The Happy Sad
  Gay Lesbian Romantic Drama
- **9:00 pm** Free Fall
  Gay Romantic Drama (Germany)

Tuesday, October 8
- **5:00 pm** The Battle of AmFar *FREE MOVIE*
  Documentary
- **6:00 pm** Under The Rainbow Shorts - Various
- **6:30 pm** Mr. Angel - Transgender Documentary
- **7:15 pm** First Period - Gay Comedy
- **8:00 pm** The New Black
  Gay Lesbian Documentary
- **9:10 pm** Kill Your Darlings
  Gay Romantic Drama

Wednesday, October 9
- **12:00 pm** Noon Shorts
  Various
- **3:30 pm** Seventh-Gay Adventists
  Gay Lesbian Documentary
- **5:30 pm** Two: The Story of Roman and Nyro
  Gay Documentary
- **6:00 pm** Big Joy: The Adventures of James Broughton - Gay Documentary
- **7:15 pm** Reaching For The Moon
  Lesbian Romantic Drama
- **7:30 pm** Meth Head
  Gay Drama
- **9:15 pm** Southern Baptist Sissies
  Gay Comedy

Thursday, October 10
- **2:30 pm** I Always Said Yes: The Many Lives of Wakefield Poole (Encore)
  Gay Documentary
- **4:30 pm** Joy! Portrait of a Nun
  Gay Documentary
- **5:30 pm** Best Of Shorts
  Various
- **6:00 pm** The Falls: Testament of Love *Just Added!*
  Gay Lesbian Comedy Drama
- **7:00 pm** Ian Harvie Superhero
  Gay Romantic Comedy
- **8:30pm** Bridegroom
  Gay Documentary

Our Movies ★ Our Stories ★ Our Lives

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GA VOICE
THE GEORGIA VOICE
PO Box 77401 | Atlanta, GA 30357
404-815-6941 | www.thegavoice.com

EDITORIAL
Editor: David Aaron Moore
dmoore@thegavoice.com

Deputy Editor: Dyana Bagby
dbagby@thegavoice.com

Art Director: Mike Ritter
mritter@thegavoice.com

CONTRIBUTORS
Melissa Carter, Jim Farmer, Shannon Hames, Topher Payne, Matt Schafer, Steve Warren, Ryan Lee

BUSINESS
Publisher: Christina Cash
ccash@thegavoice.com

Associate Publisher: Tim Boyd
tboyd@thegavoice.com

Sales Manager: Marshall Graham
mgraham@thegavoice.com

Sales Executive: Anne Clarke
The Clarke Agency
aclarke@thegavoice.com

National Advertising:
Rivendell Media, 908-232-2021
sales@rivendellmedia.com

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09.27.13

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OUTSPOKEN

FRIENDS & FOES IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I am usually a very strong and confident person, but I have my moments too. Although there was was positive feedback, there was a lot of negative too, and the negative affected me more than it ever has before. I recorded this because I didn't know how else to vent, I didn't want to talk to anybody."

– **Cassidy Lynn Campbell**, a transgender teen who was named Huntington Beach high school homecoming queen, in a YouTube post where she was visibly upset by negative reactions. (Sept. 23, Los Angeles Times)

"As much as I would like to think that politics has nothing to do with this, it looks as if it does. It would be unfair to prevent a well-qualified judicial nominee from proceeding with the nomination process because he is an openly gay black male."

– Yolanda Strader, president of Miami's largest association for black lawyers, on Sen. Marco Rubio's decision to withdraw support of nomination of Miami Judge William Thomas to the federal bench. (Sept. 24, The New York Times)

"Putin, end your war on Russian gays!"

— a shout by an unidentified man at the Metropolitan Opera's opening night of Tchaikovsky's "Eugene Onegin." Gay activists protested the opera to bring awareness to Russia's law banning "propaganda on nontraditional sexual relationships" that President Vladimir Putin signed into law in June. (Sept. 23, The New York Times)

"I got married in New York because we would've got married in Canada if it counted in the U.S. but you all know what I mean. We got married in New York so that she could get her green card so we could be free. We waited such a long time."

– Atlanta's Indigo Girl **Emily Saliers** announcing her marriage to Tristin Chipman, a Canadian, at a Vancouver show last weekend. (Sept. 24, Huffington Post)

Funny Woman: Wanda Sykes

Quadruple threat talent takes to Cobb Energy Center during ATL Pride

By SHANNON HAMES

Wanda Sykes has been making people laugh her entire life. Her successful career as a writer, author, actress, and stand-up comedienne has garnered a solid following of fans, numerous comedy awards and even an Emmy.

Her public coming out in 2009 at a marriage equality rally and speaking for LGBT rights has earned her the love and admiration of the queer community at large.

Wanda will be performing her standup routine at the Cobb Energy Center during Atlanta Pride week on Oct. 12. In an interview with GA Voice, Sykes talked about her multilingual family, coming out to her parents later in life and her expectations for the Atlanta show audience.

When I found out your wife, Alex, had twins, I secretly wished I could be your housekeeper just to hear the funny things that were sure to occur. Your twins are now three years old – tell me about motherhood.

I think that you would really enjoy being my housekeeper because it's nuts. I look around in my house and ask myself how the hell this happened? How did I get here? I am married to a French woman, we have 3 year old twin toddlers and they speak French and the whole thing is just crazy to me. I'm a minority in my own house now.

I walk around listening to all of this French-speak and I just have to call my friends and say, "Hey, can you just come over here, please? There's just too many of them."

It's fun, though. I'm enjoying it. It's stressful and frustrating at times just because of the language but overall, it's great.

But your children are bi-lingual, right?

No. No, they are not. My wife likes to say that but, no. They speak French. That's what they do.

So there is a communication barrier for you?

Right. Either I have to work on my French or my kids have to work on their English because I'm pretty sure that my daughter asked me for an eight ball the other day. (Laughs)

You came out in a surprising and very organic way. It was at a rally for marriage equality and it took place just after you married your wife. You later said you hadn't planned it and it just felt right to you.

Yes, very much so. I hadn't planned on saying anything but it was just a natural thing for me to do at the time. I have absolutely no regrets. Most of the people who knew me already knew I was gay anyway so it wasn't really a matter of letting everyone know – just the people who didn't know me.

What was your private coming out like?

I came out privately to my parents about 5 years before I came out publicly. It didn't go well at all. I was having surgery and my mom, who lives on the east coast, wanted to come out to Los Angeles to be with me. I had to let her know that the person that I was living with at the time was not my roommate as my mom had thought.

I mean, I'm a grown woman in my 40s and doing really, really well. I don't need a roommate to help me out financially and pay half the rent and utilities... (laughs) I figured that my parents just knew but they didn't.

My mother just lost it. It was painful. She didn't even come out to L.A. and it was very hard for all of us.

But now, we're great. She's grandma and it's all good. It just took time and me being comfortable with myself and who I was and that made them more comfortable. They knew that they were going to either embrace it or not have the relationship with their daughter. I'm happy that it all worked out.

You had a career in Washington, D.C., at the National Security Agency after you graduated from college. What made you leave that and go in the direction of stand-up comedy?

I can look in my high school yearbook and read comments that people wrote and it's just full of classmates saying things like "Thank you for making class so much fun" or teachers saying "You always make me laugh." I always enjoyed making people laugh. It was the encouragement I got from others to keep going. People kept telling me how funny I was and that I should be on stage. So I just listened and went for it.

Who is your celebrity crush?

Is my wife going to read this?

No. Definitely not.

I am going to go with Halle Berry. She is just jaw-dropping gorgeous.

Atlanta looks forward to seeing you on Oct. 12 during Pride weekend. Is there anything you want to say to your fans before they come see you?

Yes, I always have a great time in Atlanta. I'm really looking forward to coming down there. I respect everyone's right to be proud and do your thing but I just wanted to say that I really don't need to have the ass-less chaps at my show (laughs). If you could just pass that on to everyone, I'd appreciate it. They make me pay to clean those seats after the show.

Tickets to Wanda Sykes range from $36.50 to $62 and can be purchased at the event or by visiting http://www.cobbenergycentre.com/event/wanda-sykes

Wanda Sykes on her French speaking twins Olivia and Lucas: "I have to work on my French or my kids have to work on their English because I'm pretty sure that my daughter asked me for an eight ball the other day." (Publicity photo)

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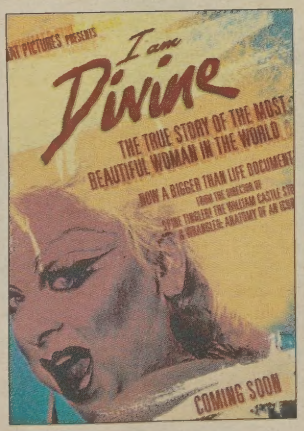
Out on Film fest offers plenty of reasons to go out

Tears, laughter, drama and sex are just part of this year's line-up

by STEVE WARREN

Opening night kicks off with 'G.B.F' at 7 p.m. (above). 'I Am Divine' headlines Oct. 5 at 7:05 p.m. (below right). Don't miss 'Who's Afraid of Vagina Wolf' Oct. 7 at 7 p.m. (below left).



Atlanta's annual Out On Film festival begins with a 15-year-old being murdered for being out at school (in "Valentine Road") and ends with a man being erased from his late partner's life by a homophobic family (in "Bridegroom").

If they're smart, the concession stand at the Landmark Midtown Art Cinemas will stock up on Kleenex tissues during Atlanta's 26th annual festival of LGBT cinema. There are definitely some tearjerkers — but also plenty of laughs between them, as well as suspense, beauty, empowerment, information, nostalgia and even sex; plus a whole lot of reasons to be proud of the talent and creativity in our community.

Curated by GA Voice contributor Jim Farmer, Out on Film opens Oct.1 at the Rush Center, 1530 DeKalb Ave., and continues Oct. 3-10 at the Landmark, 931 Monroe Drive.

The VIP Lounge for networking and socializing between films is next door at Apres Diem. Filmmakers, actors and others associated with the films are scheduled to appear almost every night. More information is available at outonfilm.org.

We've managed to preview more than three dozen of the festival films, most of the shorts programs and festival favorites for the fresh talent they introduce.

Of all that I saw, there were only five I wouldn't rate at least two-and-a-stars out of five. Considering how lame a lot of queer films used to be, taking their niche audience for granted, that's saying a lot. And you may even like the ones that didn't appeal to me.

Groups of people tell their stories in "Breaking Through" (LGBT elected officials), "Before You Know It" (gay seniors), "Intersexion" (people born intersex), "Seventh-Gay Adventists" (Seventh-Day Adventists), "Lesbiana – A Parallel Revolution" (lesbian feminists of the 1980s), "I'm a Pornstar" (average Joes who appear on porn sites) and "The Blacks of Their Eyes" (men attracted to men of other races, mostly whites who like blacks).

"The New Black" shows the progress African-American churches and churchgoers are making in getting over their homophobia and joining us in our struggle for equality after being manipulated over Proposition 8 and other issues.

"The Campaign" offers another perspective on the battle against Prop. 8, happily relegated to history since this year's Supreme Court decision but offering lessons to be applied in future fights.

Drugs are the serpent in the "Gayden" of Eden in "Meth Head," a gay-specific romantic drama that could find mainstream acceptance. The romance between Mormon missionaries that began in "The Falls," which was surprisingly good, continues in "The Falls: Testament of Love." Do I sense an ongoing soap opera in the making?

Nearly half the films are documentaries, which used to mean their appeal is largely limited to your interest in the subject matter. That's still true to some extent, but docs are no longer the bland affairs they used to be. Some will suck you in with their entertainment values, incidentally stirring your interest in something you never knew, cared or thought about before.

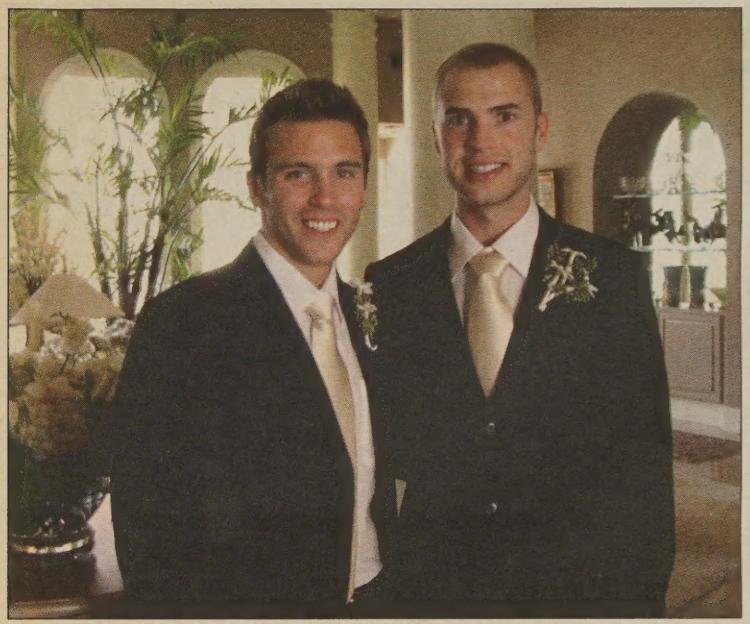
Since "Brokeback Mountain" reached a broad mainstream audience, "Queer as Folk" attracted a lot of straight female viewers and the Lifetime Network realized gay men are a big part of the viewership for their women's programming, the wall between audience segments has largely evaporated.

While some festival films still limit their targets like drones, most can be enjoyed — or not — by everyone.

A number of the films are biographical, some celebratory, some mournful. A few of the subjects are still alive. James Broughton ("Big Joy: The Adventures of James Broughton"), and Gore Vidal ("Gore Vidal: The United States of Amnesia") lived full lives, Divine ("I Am Divine") a half-full life; but Mark Bingham ("The Rugby Player") died young, Tom Bridegroom ("Bridegroom") even younger and Larry King ("Valentine Road"), the youngest.

Lesbian poet Elizabeth Bishop's life is dramatized in "Reaching for the Moon," as is gay poet Allen Ginsberg's in "Kiss Your Darlings." Transgender comic Ian Harvie uses a lot of autobiographical material in his stand-up act in "Ian Harvie Superhero."

Sister Missionary P. Delight is profiled in "Joy! Portrait of a Nun," while erotic filmmaker Wakefield Poole ("I Always Said Yes: The Many Lives of Wakefield Poole") and porn star Buck Angel ("Mr. Angel") participate in telling their own stories. So do songwriter Desmond Child and Curtis Shaw Child in "Two: The Story of Roman &



'Kill Your Darlings' screens Oct. 8 at 9:10 p.m. (above right). 'Southern Baptist Sissies' is the lead feature for Oct. 9 at 9:15 p.m. (below). Out On Film wraps Oct. 10 with 'Bridegroom' at 8:30 p.m. (above left).

Nyro," about the twin boys they're raising.

HIV/AIDS historians will appreciate "The Battle of AmfAR" and the background of the dance drama "Test."

With this kind of diversity in documentaries, who needs narrative films? If your answer is "I do," you've got plenty to choose from.

How would John Hughes have depicted high school in the 21st century? Perhaps like the somewhat serious "Geography Club," or the campier "G.B.F." Certainly not like "First Period," with drag queens in the lead female roles. You'll recognize themes of cliques and competition for popularity, plus the first two involve coming out issues and support groups for LGBT students.

Apparently Southerners can't always be funny, because a lot of drama interrupts the comedy of "Southern Baptist Sissies" and a visiting Southern mom blows out the comic candles on "Birthday Cake." The parody "Hot Guys with Guns" may not have the comic high points of the others but it never stops trying to be funny. Neither does the farce "Tell No One," despite some serious underlying themes.

Four films of minimal interest to lesbians consist largely of two men lying around in various stages of undress, either having sex or thinking about it. "Getting Go: The Go Doc Project" is a mockumentary about two guys falling in love while one makes a movie about the other. "Hawaii" is a potential romance that keeps you waiting and wondering. So does "Solo," which could be a romance or a thriller; but not "Truth," which lets you know at the outset there's a "psycho" in the mix.

More female-oriented are "Breaking the Girls," another variation on the "Strangers on a Train" concept of exchanging murders; "Margarita," about immigration and lesbian love; "Who's Afraid of Vagina Wolf?" about a group of lesbian friends; and the lesbian triangle at the heart of "Reaching for the Moon."

Bisexuals create the drama in "The Happy Sad," "Free Fall" and "Pit Stop."

If gender and orientation labels are too confining for you, the people of "Intersexion" were born with "ambiguous genitalia," while "Mr. Angel," "Ian Harvie Superhero" and the heroines of "F to 7th" and "Melting Away" have transitioned or are transitioning. Like Divine ("I Am Divine"), the stars of "First Period" just wear women's clothing, as does the real-life victim in "Valentine Road."

Out on Film isn't entirely all-American, but there seems to be less foreign representation than usual. Argentina gives us "Solo" and "Hawaii," Canada "Margarita" and "Lesbiana – A New Revolution," Israel "Melting Away," Italy "Tell No One," Brazil "Reaching for the Moon" and Germany "Free Fall."

The gayby boom gets a shout out in "Birthday Cake" and "Two: The Story of Roman & Nyro," while the issues of bullying and marriage equality turn up in several films.

Trying to come up with an answer in case you ask what's my favorite film in the festival (maybe "Bridegroom," which is stuck in my head like no other), I thought I would narrow it down to a top ten list, but I just kept adding titles I should have included. I simply couldn't pick my favorites, so you'll just have to go to the GA Voice website to read all the reviews.

For more information and reviews for Out on Film go to www.thegavoice.com

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Emory's theology school honors anti-gay minister

LGBT students, faculty denounce decision

By DYANA BAGBY

The **Rev. H. Eddie Fox** at the 2008 United Methodist General Conference in Fort Worth, Texas. (Photo by Mike DuBose of the United Methodist News Service)

Rev. Dr. H. Eddie Fox, head of World Evangelism for the World Methodist Council, is set to receive a Distinguished Alumni Award from the Emory Candler School of Theology leaving many university students and faculty on the defensive regarding Fox's selection.

Fox has led two UMC General Conferences — in 2004 and 2008 — to keep in place the church's longstanding policy that gay and lesbian sexual orientation is "incompatible with Christian teaching."

For many years, LGBT members of the church have fought to change the wording of the church's policies to reflect there is division on the issue of sexuality.

While Emory University prides itself on being an inclusive institution, welcoming of LGBT students and faculty, some say the Candler School of Theology strays from Emory's values. The Candler School of Theology was founded by what is now the United Methodist Church.

John Blevins, who is gay, received his Doctor of Theology from Emory in 2005 and was a Candler School of Theology assistant professor from 2006-2009. He is now an associate research professor in the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory.

"Historically, [the Candler School of Theology] is on the side of not having a welcoming space for faculty who are out and open," Blevins told the GA Voice. "The administration is very affirming personally and they let me know they support me personally, but they didn't know what to do in offering support at the institutional level," he said.

DEAN, STUDENTS MEET OVER CONTROVERSIAL CHOICE

The decision to honor Fox rankled students and led to a two-and-a-half hour meeting on Sept. 13 between Jan Love, Dean and Professor of Christianity and World Politics in the Candler School of Theology; other faculty and members of Sacred Worth, a student government organization.

In her open letter to students, Love reiterated Candler and Emory's belief in full inclusion of LGBT people.

"Candler not only adheres to all Emory University policies on inclusion but we also fully welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons into our community as we do any other students, staff and faculty," Love stated.

"In addition to welcoming LGBT persons into the larger community, Candler provides support for student, staff, and alumni groups that are organized specifically to create community for LGBT persons and initiates dialogue on LGBT concerns within classrooms and co-curricular activities. Candler promotes and celebrates the fullness of community we seek to cultivate for all people," Love stated.

After thoughtful consideration, Love said she decided to honor Fox because he inspires people around the world with his "deep dedication to proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ," Love offered.

Love noted in her letter that the UMC position on sexuality is a "volatile" subject, as it is within many denominations.

A luncheon to honor the Distinguished Alumni honorees is set for Sept. 27. Fox has indicated he will not be attending the program because of travel plans.

Fox told the campus newspaper Emory Wheel the accusation of being "anti-gay" did not surprise him and it made him "sad that people try to separate that singular moment in time from the work of a lifetime."

Fox also told the Emory Wheel, "I am not alright with being called 'anti-gay' at all. I don't accept it."

Blevins said he has always felt welcome by colleagues, faculty and students at the Candler School of Theology, but he acknowledged that as an openly gay man, and through his experiences, he "did not fit the mold of Candler's ethos on this issue."

"Candler always made some degree of space for faculty members to live an open secret [with] regards to sexual orientation," Blevins said. But living in a "don't ask, don't tell" environment put a burden on faculty. Blevins couldn't work with not being as open as he wanted, he said.

"I do think the school doesn't know what to do in this social environment in how to deal with this question [of sexual orientation]. That's disappointing," he said.

Blevins said he also believes there is an undeniable tension between the Methodist Church's position on homosexuality and Emory's values, which he says are a "direct contradiction to the denomination."

Blevins said he was happy to see the response from students and hopes it resonates with Dean Love that honoring Fox directly shuts out an entire group of people at Candler.

"Unfortunately, I think Candler has moved to be less welcoming, particularly for faculty and staff," he said.

Gay Democrat **Bob Gibeling** announced this month he is vying for state House District 54 seat. (Courtesy photo)

Gibeling makes bid for House District 54 seat

By DYANA BAGBY

Gay activist and Democrat Bob Gibeling is making his first bid for office and running for the state House District 54.

The seat has been held by Republican Ed Lindsey, who announced he is not seeking re-election after five terms so that he can pursue the 11th Congressional District seat in 2014.

Gibeling, a former Republican, is a native of Atlanta and has lived in Buckhead for 31 years. A Georgia Tech graduate with an MBA, he is also a lifelong Lutheran who was elected four times to the governing council of Redeemer Lutheran Church, the largest Lutheran congregation in the South. Gibeling confirmed he took an early retirement from Lutheran Services of Georgia to organize his campaign for the Georgia legislature.

Last year's redistricting of District 54 means the district is not a Republican stronghold as it has been in the past, Gibeling said. He indicated he will be seeking the support of moderate Republicans and Democrats alike.

"I just felt like I wanted to do something different professionally and honestly I felt I was being called to do something different," he told the GA Voice.

Gibeling said he considered running in a different race but decided it wasn't a good fit for what he wanted to do.

"I wanted to make a difference. I wanted to find some race to make a difference and it ends up the place where I lived 31 years is that place," he said.

"The people of this district are some of the most reasonable, rational and good hearted people you can find. The extreme positions we see in Georgia politics are not representative of the people of the 54th District," Gibeling said in a statement. "I was once an active Republican many years ago, but have seen the party become dominated by its radical voices. That's one reason I am running as an independent thinking Democrat."

Gibeling serves as secretary of the LGBT Caucus of the Democratic Party of Georgia.

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Gay Mens' HIV/AIDS Awareness Day update

Despite treatment advances, the crisis is not over

By DAVID AARON MOORE

The CDC's Dr. David Purcell: 'Young men is where it is evolving ... we don't want another epidemic on our hands like we had in the last generation.' (Publicity photo)

Friday, Sept. 27 marks National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. Originally conceived by NAPWA (National Association of People With AIDS) in 2008 as a way to call attention to the continuing plight of gay men coping with AIDS, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has stepped forward to remind us that while AIDS has become manageable in many ways, there is still no known cure.

While the impact of the AIDS pandemic has crossed multiple barriers around the globe, gay men remain at the center of the U.S. epidemic. More than 30 years after the first cases of AIDS were reported, gay and bisexual men account for a large majority of all Americans living with HIV and nearly two-thirds of new infections.

According to the CDC's HIV/AIDS Prevention representative Dr. David Purcell, the number of infections for men who have sex with men remains staggering.

"Gay and bisexual men represent only two percent of the population," Purcell offers. "Yet in infection rates, they are over 60 percent of the population at large.

"Especially in young men of color. In the gay community, they represent over 55 percent of the newly infected, and there has been a particular increase over the last five years. "

Purcell suggests there are many driving factors that place gay men at higher risk.

"Many are unaware of their status, so infecting partners happens more often. There is still a stigma attached to the disease for many individuals and oftentimes homophobia, lack of insurance and concerns about confidentiality have deterred some men from seeking the help they need."

On Friday, Sept. 26, AID Atlanta, Georgia Equality and The Rush Center will host a viewing of the 1999 gay Film Classic, 'Flawless' in recognition of National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. (Publicity photo)

The CDC also points to apathy as a challenge men in the gay community face, and 'underestimating the impact AIDS can actually have on their lives. While younger gay men think HIV is easily manageable with medication, they don't always have the foresight to realize the long-term ramifications of possibly taking medication every day, for the rest of their lives and the potential side-effects the drugs can have.

"Young men is where it is evolving," Purcell continues. "While the LGBT community has a lot on its plate these days, I think it's time to reengage in the fight. Action is needed at every level. It's important to understand the risk. Reduce the number of partners you have. Practice safer sex. We don't want another epidemic on our hands like we had in the last generation. Testing is one of the first and most important steps."

In recognition of National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, AID Atlanta, Georgia Equality and The Rush Center will present a screening of the 1999 Gay Film Classic, "Flawless" on Sept. 27. The event will be hosted by Coordinators of GO Atlanta, Deeper Love Project and Evolution Project, the gay men's prevention programs of AID Atlanta.

A community discussion regarding HIV/AIDS and the stigma surrounding the disease and those affected by it will take place along with the screening.

Admission to the film is free and will start at 7:00 p.m. at The Phillip Rush Center, located at 1530 Dekalb Ave.

NEWS IN BRIEF

DEMOCRATIC PARTY CHAIR EXPLAINS MARRIAGE FLIP-FLOP

DuBose Porter, newly elected chair of the Democratic Party of Georgia, said personal experiences played a role in his decision to now support marriage equality.

Porter, of Dublin, spoke at the Sept. 19 party's LGBT Caucus meeting where he spoke openly and frankly about his past and what he hopes for the future of the party on progressive issues, including gay marriage.

DuBose Porter, newly elected chair of the Democratic Party of Georgia. (File photo)

State Rep. Karla Drenner (D-Atlanta) who led the fight in the legislature against the marriage amendment in 2004 and went head to head with former state Rep. Porter on the issue, asked him how he planned to help bridge the gap for marriage equality outside metro Atlanta.

Porter was House Majority Pro Tem during the marriage debate and voted twice in favor of it.

"Not being afraid to talk about it," Porter said. "All of us have personal experiences. I went through a pretty messy divorce. What I thought was the perfect marriage just fell apart."

Porter and his ex-wife, Carol Porter, ran for governor and lieutenant governor respectively in 2010. They announced their divorce in 2011.

Porter said a gay cousin from DeKalb County went to New York to get legally married and he realized their commitment to each other was stronger than what he had.

"It's better to have a bald-headed fat redneck from there," he laughed. "I think I can help take that message better ... than just having someone from Atlanta talk about it. [And] because I believe in it and I'm not afraid to talk about it," he said.

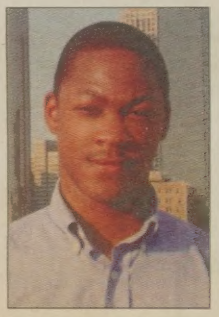
"Times have changed haven't they," Drenner said.

After the meeting, Drenner said she is hopeful Porter will follow through with his promise to speak about marriage equality outside metro Atlanta.

"We'll have to wait and see," she said.

CANDIDATE SEEKS TO BE FIRST GAY BLACK MAN ON CITY COUNCIL

Running on the platform of that he touts as direct democracy, Jon Jones said he is vying for the Atlanta City Council District 5 seat as a way to give constituents a direct role in what legislation is passed that directly impacts their lives.



Jon Jones is running for the Atlanta City Council District 5 seat. (Courtesy photo)

Jones would also be the first openly gay black man elected to the city council. Alex Wan, seeking his second term as the District 6 representative, was the first openly gay man elected to the council four years ago. Lesbians have served on the council in the past, including Cathy Woolard, who was president of the council, and Anne Fauver, who also represented District 6.

"It would send a tremendous message to have a black gay man, the first, elected to the Atlanta City Council in the city," Jones said. Atlanta is considered a black gay mecca and, according to U.S. Census figures, has a high population of black and gay lesbian couples.

Jones is one of three openly gay people running for District 5 held by incumbent Natalyn Archibong. Matt Rinker, who has been endorsed by the Log Cabin Republicans, announced earlier this year, and lesbian Christine Enterkin is also running as openly gay.

Jones said he is seeking endorsements from the Democratic Party of Georgia, Georgia Equality and also the Evolution Project, a division of AID Atlanta that serves young gay black men.

Jones said he wants to implement "direct democracy" into the Atlanta City Council — a way to allow residents to actually vote, through their computers or smart phones — on legislative issues.

He also said he would decline the raise that the Atlanta City Council members voted to give themselves and instead give that money back to the taxpayers who could decide what to do with it.

Archibong voted against the pay raise.

Jones currently works as a pricing analyst at Guidant Group Inc.

The election is Nov. 5.

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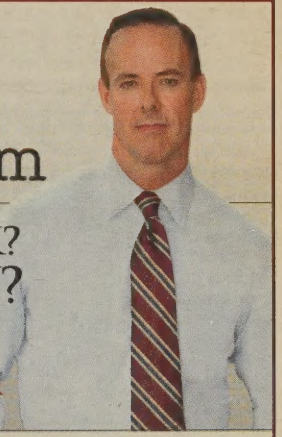

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'Out 2 Enroll' resource to help navigate 'Obamacare'

New online program to specifically reach out to LGBT people

By DYANA BAGBY

An effort to educate and raise awareness among LGBT people about the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, begins in earnest next month when the law goes into effect.

A new program, Out 2 Enroll, will be unveiled Oct. 11 on National Coming Out Day — which also happens to be the weekend of Atlanta Pride — via its website at www.out2enroll.org and will be a resource for LGBT seeking help in maneuvering the new law during open enrollment. The ACA sets up online marketplaces, also known as exchanges, for people to study and then buy insurance from.

Out 2 Enroll is a collaboration between the Sellers Dorsey Foundation, the Center for American Progress and the Federal Agencies Project and was discussed at a recent White House briefing where several Atlanta LGBT advocates were invited to attend to learn more about the Affordable Care Act.

Monica Simpson, a lesbian, is the executive director of Sister Song, a reproductive justice organization. She attended the White House briefing on Sept. 12 featuring Secretary of Health and Human Service Kathleen Sebelius. Simpson said her organization is focused on ensuring women become patient activists as well as finding ways to break down the walls of health care disparities, especially among people of color.

"We have our questions like everyone does," she said. "People are really confused. It's hard for us to even understand. It's a new language for folks, especially when you are talking about communities of color. We have a different connection to what we call the medical industry complex. We want to try to make things culturally competent and linguistically competent."

As part of Obamacare, "navigators" will help those during the six month enrollment period that begins Oct. 1 find the plan that best fits their needs. In January, health care exchanges and the individual mandate under the law are scheduled to begin. This will also be the time when insurers will not be able to discriminate against or charge higher rates for individuals based on pre-existing medical conditions or gender, such as HIV.

Jeff Graham, executive director of Georgia Equality and who also attended the White House briefing, said the Health Initiative and Phillip Rush Center in Atlanta received enough federal funding to hire one full-time navigator and two part-time navigators to help LGBT people in Georgia seek and purchase the plans best for their needs.

President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act's open enrollment begins Oct. 1. Activists want to raise awareness and educate LGBT people about their option. (File photo)

"Our navigator program will be running in early October. The open enrollment starts Oct. 1 and goes for six months. By early November we will have a good analysis of the plans and specifically for those with HIV," Graham said. "We want people to be really aware about enrollment but understand it will take us a few weeks to fully analyze what is available especially since the Insurance Commissioner has not released the details to the public yet."

OUT 2 ENROLL NOT PUTTING A 'RAINBOW FLAG' ON ACA

Kellan Baker, associate director for the LGBT Research and Communications Project at the Center for American Progress, said Out 2 Enroll is not about "putting a rainbow flag" on the Affordable Care Act.

> *'We commissioned research of the experiences of LGBT people living under 400 percent of poverty level. The results were striking.'*
>
> — **Kellan Baker**, Center for American Progress

"We commissioned research of the experiences of LGBT people living under 400 percent of poverty level. The results were striking," he said.

"There is an additional layer of skepticism, LGBT people and especially transgender people said they faced discrimination, and people reported having trouble with getting their partner and kids covered through their job."

The Out 2 Enroll study of eight focus groups and a July national survey of 867 LGBT people living less than 400 percent under the Federal Poverty Level (guidelines state an individual making $3,351 a year is 350 percent under the FDL) showed these findings:

- 1 in 3 LGBT Americans do not have health insurance.
- 71 percent do not know about possible new coverage options.
- 1 in 3 respondents in a same-sex relationship tried to get coverage for a partner through an employer plan.
- Of those who tried, 50 percent had trouble getting partner coverage and 72 percent felt discriminated against during the process.
- Transgender people face frequent and significant discrimination in the form of transgender-specific insurance exclusions.
- 67 percent of LGBT respondents have been without coverage for more two or more years.
- 48 percent of LGBT people surveyed in the South do not have health insurance.

"We did focus groups with transgender people and we had tremendous difficulty because their experiences of being excluded and disenfranchisement is so overwhelming," Baker said.

Simpson of Sister Song said she was honored to be invited to the White House, but was surprised by the lack of representation of people of color — especially since people of color, especially LGBT people of color — face significant barriers obtaining health care.

"People were talking about the lack of healthcare but again there is this whole notion that those in need are overwhelmingly people of color. And they are saying this from the podium. Yet all the people talking about this were not people of color," she said.

NO MEDICAID EXPANSION IN GA.

The Affordable Care Act was signed into law by President Barack Obama in 2010. A key provision of the law was its promise to fully fund Medicaid programs in all states for three years and then decrease funding after that. Medicaid is the federal government health program for low income individuals and families

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2012, however, that states could refuse the expansion and many states in the South, including Georgia, did so.

In Georgia, one in five people has no health insurance, according to recent analysis of Census data.

Graham said Georgia Equality is part of a coalition that is pushing for Gov. Nathan Deal to change his mind and accept the Medicaid expansion. Deal has said many times he would not expand Medicaid because it would eventually cost the state too much money.

Without the Medicaid expansion, some low-income people will be eligible for subsidies from the government to buy health insurance. But others, including LGBT people with HIV/AIDS, are likely to have no options available to them, said Baker.

Baker also stressed that there is time for people to review options and it is important not to purchase something right away. With open enrollment beginning Oct. 1 and six months to buy, there is time to consider options carefully, he said.

"We will have time to figure out options," he said. "What have we found is the No. 1 one most trusted messengers for LGBT people are friends and family members. This is a community-sourced effort."

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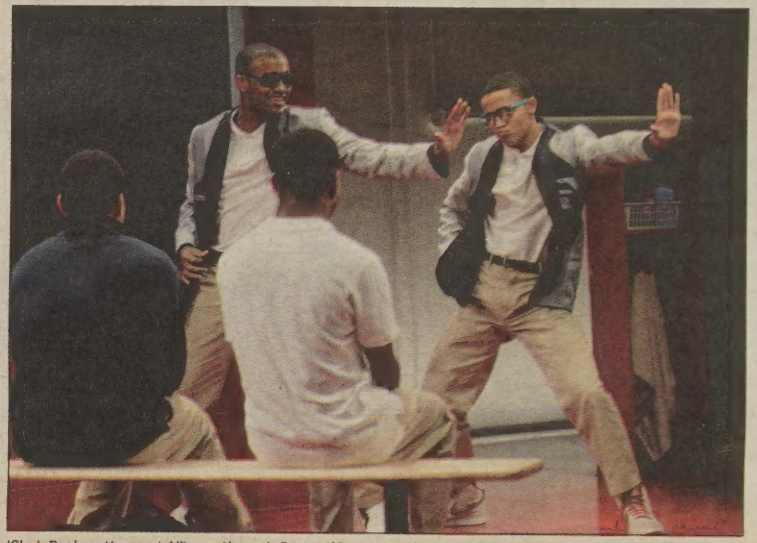
THEATER BY JIM FARMER

'Choir Boy' sings at Alliance Theatre

Internationally acclaimed playwright returns to Atlanta with another hit



'Choir Boy' continues at Alliance through Oct. 13. (Courtesy Alliance Theatre)

When gay playwright Tarell Alvin McCraney came to Atlanta and the Alliance Theatre with his play "In the Red and Brown Water" back in 2008, he was still a playwright on the rise. That's certainly not the case anymore. His new "Choir Boy" is a New York rage and the show – a joint production between the Manhattan Theatre Club, where it bowed in August, and the Alliance Theatre, where it has just opened – has become a critical darling.

At the Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys – a prestigious boarding school for African-American men in the South ("I say it's Atlanta," admits McCraney, although others say Virginia or other places) – young Pharus (Jeremy Pope) is finishing high school. He is also leader of the choir, which is the school's fundraising mechanism and its trademark, but is the target of his classmates because he is highly effeminate.

The character never actually says that he is gay.

"He doesn't need to," says the playwright. "His sexuality is assumed. How much of your sexuality can you express at 15 or 16 anyway? In a heterosexual scale, that's when you're just going out on dates.

"The assumption is about his femininity and how that doesn't fit in the mold of what the school is. Their motto is preparing men for tomorrow. It's a hard road but he finds a way to be who he is naturally, to think outside the box," McCraney says.

"This tackles all the things about growing up, growing into manhood, as well as what it means to be black and male and the avenues one can go into."

The playwright feels Pharus learns from being an outsider.

McCraney credits a lot of inspiration for "Choir Boy" to growing up in the church, but a question posed to him recently really got his creative juices going.

"I started working in London and because Barack Obama was on the rise, I was asked what it meant to be black and male now – has the paradigm changed?" he recalls. "It was a fascinating question I had no answers for. The more questions I had the more plays came up. Four or five of my plays explore this in some large or small way."

The playwright's "In the Red and Brown Water," part of the Alliance's Kendeda National Graduate Playwriting Competition series, won a Suzi Bass Award for Best Play. Since that time McCraney has been produced around the country.

He is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama, the Theater School at DePaul University, as well as the New World School of the Arts in Miami, Fla. He's also an associate artist at the Royal Shakespeare Company in Warwicke, England, and an ensemble member at the Steppenwolf Theater in Chicago.

McCraney has traveled to Georgia frequently. His family is from Milledgeville, although he grew up in Miami. He was in town for a reading of his play "Wig Out!" a few months ago and then again last week for the 10th anniversary of the Kendeda series.

Now a Chicago resident, he still feels a special connection to Atlanta audiences.

"Audiences here want real and beautiful, and they want soulful depictions of life," he says. "When we did 'Water' in 2008, we had an incredible time. You can have a show where the elements are all there, but if the audience isn't there to receive it, there is no call to respond, those things will fall flat. There have been times when the audiences here wanted to talk about the work during the show."

He is especially proud that he's been able to create three-dimensional gay and lesbian characters. "I don't think there's a show I've written that hasn't had LGBT characters," he says.

DETAILS

"Choir Boy"
Alliance Theatre
Through Oct. 13
1280 Peachtree St., Atlanta, GA 30309
www.alliancetheatre.org

On Stage

ONGOING

- **"Trash"**
  Through Sept. 28 at Onstage Atlanta
  www.processtheatre.com
  Johnny Drago's world premiere comedy stars DeWayne Morgan as a former B-movie star with a potential second chance at fame.

- **"Stomp"**
  Through Sept. 29 at the Fox Theatre
  www.foxtheatre.org
  This Atlanta favorite is a percussion symphony using unconventional instruments.

- **"Harmony"**
  Through Oct. 6 at the Alliance Theatre
  www.alliancetheatre.com
  The Alliance is staging a revised version of the Barry Manilow-Bruce Sussman musical about an all-male band in Germany in the '20s.

- **"Venus in Fur"**
  Through Oct. 6 at Actor's Express
  www.actorsexpress.com
  Gay director David Crowe helms this two character psychological/sexual drama.

- **"Walter Cronkite is Dead"**
  Through Oct. 6 at Aurora Theatre
  www.auroratheatre.com
  Gay director Brian Clowdus' production finds two women with diverse backgrounds sharing a bottle of wine – and differences – while stuck at an airport.

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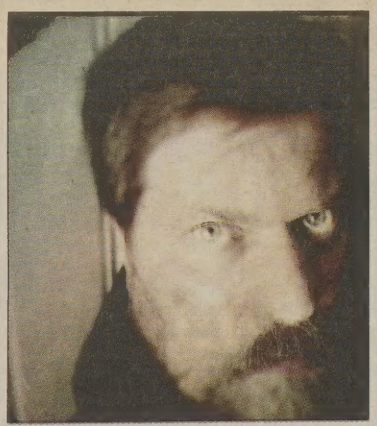
The sound of LGBT music at its best

By GREGG SHAPIRO

Celebrate Pride and National Coming Out Day with some of the the year's best queer sounds

The Pet Shop Boys celebrate 30 years in the music biz with the release of 'Electric.' (Photo by Kevin Churck/Wikimedia)

Former member of the queer folk trio Girlyman, **Tylan** is back with a new solo release entitled 'One True Thing.' (Publicity photo via Facebook)



John Grant's 'Pale Green Ghosts' might very well be one of the best queer albums of the year. (Publicity photo via Facebook)

One of the best albums by a queer artist in 2013 (if not the best), "Pale Green Ghosts" (Partisan/Bella Union) by John Grant hits all the right notes. Grant succeeds whether dabbling in invigorating queer electro or making timeless modern pop. The combination of elements, including Grant's warm, but commanding, baritone and his gift for turn of phrase, make these 11 songs worth returning to repeatedly.

Keep in mind, the subject matter is a bit bleak – "Pale Green Ghosts" is, after all, a breakup album, and Grant spends as much time putting himself through changes as he does his ex. Still, there's something irresistible at work. The suitably haunting title cut percolates like a bitter brew. Funky fashion statement "Black Belt" ("what you've got is a black belt in B.S.") is karate chop set to a disco beat. "GMF" stands for "Greatest Motherfucker" and strikes a sexy balance between pathos and parody, while "Vietnam" is as heavy as the war to which it refers.

"You Don't Have To" takes memory games to a whole new level, while "Sensitive New Age Guy" deserves to be spun at tea dances for the remainder of the year. "Ernest Borgnine" not only makes reference to the titular Oscar winner, but also to "The Shining" and "I Hate This Town" is a song we could probably all relate to at one time or another.

The Pet Shop Boys' fittingly titled "Electric" (x2/Kobalt) is the gay comeback record of the year. Approaching the 30th year of their prolific recording career, PSB electrifies listeners with their strongest set of songs in years.

Considering the increasingly icy relationship between pathetic Putin's Russia and the gay community, the timing of "Bolshy," featuring Russian lyrics, is a bit unsettling. That said, "Love Is A Bourgeois Concept," ranks with the best of Tennant and Lowe's work – it's a flawlessly modern dance track, drawing on many of PSB's trademark tricks, wrapped around the duo's brand of intellectual and sarcastic lyrics. The dancing doesn't end there – "Fluorescent" is dazzling, "Inside A Dream" is wistfully wonderful, "The Last To Die" is a lively tune on par with "...Bourgeois Concept," and "Thursday" includes a rap performed by Example. Be sure to get wired to this disc.

Stepping out on her own after a decade with queer folk trio Girlyman, Tylan (Greenstein) doesn't disappoint with her solo disc "One True Thing" (tylanmusic.com). Expanding on her already impressive songwriting and performance skills, Tylan exceeds expectations with "St. Stephen," before teaming up with Lucy Wainwright Roche on the gorgeous "Earthquakes." Roche isn't the only one supplying star power here. Amy Ray can be heard on the tearjerker "Already Fine" and that's Coyote Grace on "Lying In My Grave." "One True Thing," like John Grant's aforementioned "Pale Green Ghosts" is a breakup disc, boiling over with powerful emotions. Lesbian breakup expert Melissa Ferrick would be wise to watch her back.

The static and feedback crunch of "Brennisteinn," the opening track of "Kveikur" (XL), is a good indication that Sigur Ros, led by out gay front man Jonsi, was going for something else with this disc. The song eventually blossoms into a full-fledged rocker, by anyone's standards, which is as unexpected as it is fulfilling. You can hear the new direction elsewhere in the percussion and brass of "Hrafntinna" and the strings on "Isjaki" and "Rafstraumur." Thanks to Sigur Ros, Iceland has never been hotter.

A countertenor with a four octave range, Bobby Blue is audio sunshine. That's what makes "Sunshine" (House of Dandridge) such a perfect name for his new album. "Born, bullied and teased" in Indiana, the Brooklyn-based musician radiantly triumphs on this 12-track disc. Divided into two parts, "the album" and "the DJ set," Blue weds acoustics and electronics to luminous effect on the title tune, "Blue Island," "Go" and "Feel Good." He also puts a gorgeously gay spin on the Bread classic "If." Blue also sparkles on dance-oriented cuts including the Guanacaste Radio Mix of "Pura Vida," the Tim Letteer Club Mix of "In A Song" and "All The Stars" featuring DJs From Mars.

Back when Logo was a gay cable network interested in promoting gay content and LGBT artists, singer/songwriter Ariel Aparicio was a regular presence, his provocative and creative music videos in constant rotation. But times change and Aparicio has changed with them, now fronting a band called Bardot. The quartet's new seven-song self-titled disc features a cover of Led Zeppelin's "D'yer Maker." That should give listeners an indication of where Aparicio's head is at. But it turns out to be one of the mellowest tracks on the disc. "Sylvia, My Love," "History of Ferris Wheels" and "Satellite," on the other hand, rock with a blustery blues energy that would make Led Zeppelin blush. The disc's finest moments can be found on the irresistible pop of "Still The Rains" and subtly country "Little Face."

Patrice Pike first crossed our radar as the lead singer of the Austin band Sister 7. Sister 7 parted ways late in the last century and Pike has kept busy recording and releasing solo albums. Her latest, "The Calling" (Zainwayne) finds Pike in a reflective mood. From the JFK reference on "Count On You" to the musical philosophizing on "Blame," to the message of hope and concern on "Firefly" and the declaration of love on "I Won't Give Up," Pike calls to us and we should listen to what she has to say.

In the late 1980s/early 1990s, UK band Kitchens of Distinction was notable for having an openly gay lead singer, Patrick Fitzgerald, singing about same-sex love, and also for being critics' darlings with a decent following among the indie-rock crowd; quite an achievement for that time. But it all came to an end when KOD disbanded in the mid-1990s. Nearly 20 years later, Kitchens of Distinction have returned with "Folly" (3 Loop Music). Fans are sure to be thrilled the way the band has maintained its trademark (and influential) guitar sound combined with Fitzgerald's distinctive vocal style. Highlights of this recommended album include the marvelous "Japan to Jupiter," the catchy "Tiny Moments Tiny Omens," the extravagant "diamond leashes" of "Extravagance" and the aptly titled "The Most Beautiful Day."

Among the other out musicians making LGBT History Month in October especially memorable are singer/songwriter Camille Bloom, who returns with the six-song EP "Big Dreams" (camillebloom.com). It features the compelling acoustic version of "Damage," the pretty closing number "To The End" and the humorously hidden track "Self-Righteous Pedestrian."

Queer Austin trio The Please Please Me give you plenty of reason to "Shake A Little Harder" (thepleasepleaseme.com) on its five-song EP, beginning with "All Dance Out," "She Leaves Notes" and "Exile." Leah Jee comes across as an old-school rocker on her six song EP The Rest Is Ours (leahjee.com), especially blistering tracks including "Coming After You," "The Golden Ticket" and "Straight Up."

Blonde Afro's "Troubleshoot The Moon" (blondeafro.com) opens with the snazzy jazz of "Home" before diverging in various directions including the funky same-sex love anthem "Spread The Love" and the plucky ballad "It's Never Enough."

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Atlanta Pride rolls out new programming for 43rd annual festival

Parties and community play key roles in largest Pride in southeast

DETAILS

Atlanta Pride
Oct. 12-13
Piedmont Park
www.atlantapride.org

By DYANA BAGBY

The official opening party for Atlanta Pride at the Georgia Aquarium sold out in record time and the newly established VIP passes are also selling well as the countdown to the largest Pride fest in the southeast continues.

With Atlanta Pride just about two weeks away, set for Oct. 12-13 in Piedmont Park, a full schedule of pre-Pride events as well as new programming in the park is coming together, said Buck Cooke, executive director. Tens of thousands of people are expected to flood Piedmont Park over the weekend.

The official kick-off party on Oct. 11 at the Georgia Aquarium sells out every year – this year sold out Sept. 24. The party brings together some 4,000 people to the venue where Vicki Powell will be the headlining DJ and Chris Griswold will also be spinning the beats.

Several Atlanta Pride events are held in the days leading up to the big weekend. An HIV/AIDS Vigil is set for Oct. 9 at 7 p.m. at St. Mark United Methodist Church. An Out on Film screening of "Southern Baptist Sissies" sponsored by Atlanta Pride is also on Oct. 9 at Landmark Midtown Art Cinema at 9:15 p.m.

This year's entertainment lineup includes such names as Taylor Dayne, YouTube country crooner sensation Steve Grand, Debby Holiday, Bonnie McKee and Sonia Leigh.

Atlanta locals will also recognize one of the city's finest, Atlanta Police Officer and LGBT liaison Brian Sharp singing on the Bud Light stage on Oct. 12. Sharp just released a solo album, "Lonely For You." And, of course, it's not Atlanta Pride without the Starlight Cabaret to close out the weekend on the main stage on Oct. 13.

"People are excited about the talent we are bringing," Cook said. "We've been working 16 months on this to make sure the festival reaches every part of our community."

New this year includes a collaboration between Atlanta Pride and the queer-led youth group JustUs ATL to hold events and provide a space for young people. The space will be held at the Bandstand on Oct. 12 from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. JustUs ATL will also have a Youth Block of entertainment on the Bud Light stage beginning at noon on Oct. 12.

There will also be expanded kids programming on Oct. 12 near the park's playground and Greystone Pool House, Cooke said. There will be arts and crafts, a puppet show and even kids yoga.

Speaking of yoga, last year's Lady Gaga yoga session was so popular it returns again on Oct. 12 and will be held in the park's athletic fields. Presented by lululemon athletica and Tough Love Yoga, the all-levels class will be fueled by the music of the Mother Monster.

Also new this year is an LGBT College Fair on Oct. 12.

"We've got a lot of new things we're rolling out hopefully people will enjoy and find them beneficial," Cook said. "We want to see people enjoying the programming, the talent, the marches, the more family-oriented programming."

There will of course be the expansive marketplace throughout the park and a community health expo where attendees can receive free HIV tests.

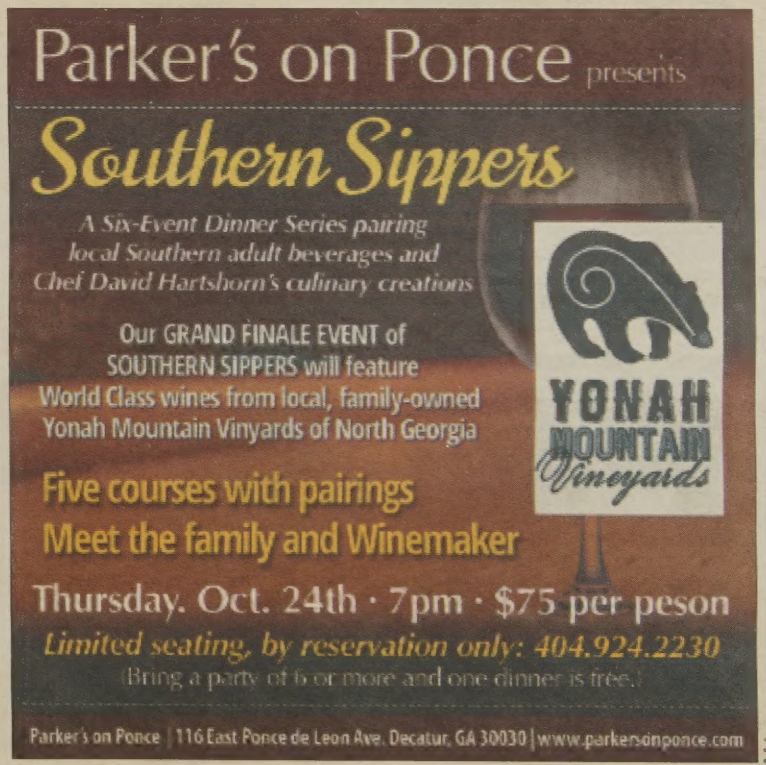
A commitment ceremony will be held at the W Atlanta Midtown on Oct. 12 starting at 11 a.m. And then there's time to put on your marching boots for the annual Trans March and Dyke March, also on Oct. 12. Other events that day include a Military Veterans Taps and Wreath Placing Ceremony at the intersection of 12th St. and Piedmont Ave.

The Atlanta Pride Parade on Oct. 13 steps off at its traditional time of 1 p.m. and thousands of people will line the streets to watch floats representing gay bars, favorite restaurants, the leather community, politicians and numerous non-profit organizations serving the LGBT communities.

And it wouldn't be Pride without the parties. Atlanta's gay bars are offering up some of their own hot entertainment and specials for the weekend. The official closing party this year on Oct. 13 is at Jungle with DJ Corey David.

On Friday, Oct. 11, a new party is coming to town: "TAB," and will be held at the Tabernacle in center city Atlanta near Olympic Park. Entry fee of $35 also gets you a ride on the new Skyview Ferris Wheel across the street from the venue. DJ Jay McCracken returns to Atlanta to spin for this party.

Last year's Atlanta Pride kick-off party was a sold out event, as is this year's 5th annual party, held again at the Georgia Aquarium. (Photo by Brent Rence Corcoran)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Event spotlight

FRIDAY, SEPT. 27

Local boy done good **John Mayer** returns to the ATL tonight at 7 p.m. at **Aaron's Amphitheatre**, www.livenation.com

TUESDAY, OCT. 1

Blondie's No Principals Tour with special guest **X** comes to the **Buckhead Theatre** tonight at 8 p.m. www.thebuckheadtheatre.com

THURSDAY, OCT. 10

The Welsh indie-rock trio **The Joy Formidable** opens for **Passion Pit** tonight, 10 p.m., **Masquerade**, www.masqueradeatlanta.com

BEST BETS

09.27.13–10.11.13

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FRIDAY, SEPT. 27

The first exhibit from Emory University's collections of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender materials – **"Building a Movement in the Southeast: LGBT Collections in MARBL"** – is on display at the university's Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library at the **Robert W. Woodruff Library**, www.emory.edu

The **Atlanta Gay and Lesbian Chamber (AGLCC)** hosts its **Fourth Friday** event from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at Zocalo, www.atlantagaychamber.org

The **Big Wooden Deck Party** is a benefit for **Jerusalem House** with a signature Glass Slipper martini, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at **Henry's Midtown**, www.henrysatl.com

Antigone Rising & A Fragile Tomorrow team up at 7 p.m. at **Eddie's Attic**, www.eddiesattic.com

This month's **"Civil Rights Movie"** feature is the gay-themed **"Prayers for Bobby,"** 7 – 9 p.m. at **Saint Mark United Methodist Church**, www.stmarkumc.org

Sing "All Night Long" along with **Lionel Richie** tonight at 8 p.m. at **Chastain Park**, www.chastainseries.com

10th & Piedmont is the location for this month's **Swank party for the ladies**, beginning at 9 p.m., 10th & Piedmont, www.communitashospitality.com/10th-and-piedmont/

Folk rock great **Richard Bicknell** performs at 9:30 p.m. at **Eddie's Attic**, www.eddiesattic.com

Edie Cheezburger and other drag personalities raise money for Atlanta Pride at the **Other Show** benefit, 9:30 p.m., **Jungle,** www.jungleatlcom

Otter Pop is a celebration of otters, wolves, silver foxes, cubs and furry subspecies of men at 10 p.m. at **Mary's,** www.marysatlanta.com

DJ Factore spins from 10 p.m. – 3 a.m. at **Jungle**, www.jungleatl.com

SATURDAY, SEPT. 28

Former Atlanta mayor **Shirley Franklin** is a guest at **CHRIS Kids**' 13th annual **CHRIStal Ball** event, 6 – 10 p.m. at **Georgia Aquarium,** www.chriskids.org

FRIDAY, SEPT. 27

Atlanta favorite **Michelle Malone** performs twice tonight, at 7:30 and 9:30 p.m., at the **Velvet Note**, www.thevelvetnote.com

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Play 4 Free Ladies event, with **DJ Adore** and **DJ Silver Knight**, **Aurum Lounge**, 6 – 10 p.m., www.ladiesatplay.com

Country headliner **Martina McBride** performs at 7 p.m., **Chastain Park**, www.chastainseries.com

Hosted by **Nicole Paige Brooks**, **"Legendary Children"** is a group photography exhibit featuring work by **Blane Bussey**, **Jon Dean**, **Blake England**, **Kevin O**, and **Matt Terrell** at 7 p.m., with a drag show at 9 p.m., **gallery 1562**, www.gallery1526.com

Wanna be the next **Mr. Hideaway Bear and Cub**? Come to **Roy's Hideaway Compound** for the 8 p.m. competition, www.royshideaway.com

Bedlam presents **CirqueDeCabaret La Suite**, a dance party with performance art, at 10:30 p.m., **Jungle Atlanta**, www.jungleatl.com

Competition will be stiff at the **"Hot Chest" Contest** tonight at **Blake's**, www.blakesontheparkatlanta.com

SUNDAY, SEPT. 29

Join **Lambda Legal** supporters at the annual **Atlanta Garden Party** to celebrate victories for the LGBT community, with cocktails and hors d'oeuvres provided by **Kitchens New Cleghorn**, LLC., 3 – 6 p.m., www.lambdalegal.org

Dinner with the Divas, hosted by **Phoenix**, is a night of fun at the happening new **Lips,** www.lipsusa.com

MONDAY, SEPT. 30

Help out **Charis Circle** by dining out at **Lawrence's Cafe** today, www.lawrencescafe.com

The **Decatur Business Association** hosts a golf tournament at the **Smoke Rise Golf Club** in Stone Mountain, beginning at 10 a.m., with proceeds going to help fund future events held by the association, such as the Concerts on the Square and Decatur Beach Party, www.smokerisecc.com

TUESDAY, OCT. 1

The **Philip Rush Center** and **Out On Film** present a pre-festival screening of the documentary **"Valentine Road,"** followed by a discussion on bullying, 7 p.m., Philip Rush Center, www.rushcenteratl.org

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 2

Fidlar and the Orwells are on a twin bill tonight, with doors opening at 9 p.m., at **The Drunken Unicorn**, www.thedrunkenunicorn.net

It's **Cubby Hole Underwear/Blackjack** night, 10 – 11 p.m., at the **Atlanta Eagle**, www.atlantaeagle.com

The Triple Threat Show with **Aurora Savage**, **Daniella Vess**, and **Serenity-Jade Paris** showcases Atlanta's new and upcoming performers, plus a panel discussion, games and prizes, **LeBuzz**, www.thenewlebuzz.com

THURSDAY, OCT. 3

Kennesaw State University's GLBTIQ Student Retention Services presents the **LGBTQ History Exhibit: "Opening Doors, Outing LGBTQ History,"** from 5 – 7 p.m. at the **Carmichael Student Center**, www.kennesaw.edu

Out On Film, Atlanta's LGBT film festival, opens tonight at 7 p.m. with the comedy **"G.B.F."** followed by an after party at the **Atlanta W Midtown**, www.outonfilm.org

An array of local writers take part in the **Stride Into Pride Atlanta Literary All Star Showcase**, 7:30 p.m., **Charis Books**, www.charisbooksandmore.com

FRIDAY, OCT. 4

Philip Bonneau's acclaimed photographic series continues in **"Heroes + Villains: Lost + Found,"** a benefit for **Lost-N-Found**, 6 – 10 p.m., **Suite Spot**, http://www.suitespot.net/ www.suitespot.net

SATURDAY, OCT. 5

Tennis great **Martina Navratilova** kicks off a busy day at the AARP national conference with a fitness routine from 7:30 – 8:30 a.m., followed by **"Powerful Allies – Real Stories Making a Difference in the LGBT Community"** presented by **SAGE** and the **AARP Foundation** at 2:30 p.m., then a reception with political humorist **Kate Clinton**, **Georgia World Congress Center,** www.gwcc.com

Photo by Timothy White

FRIDAY, OCT. 4

Oscar winner **Whoopi Goldberg** kicks off the **Life @ 50+ National AARP Event & Expo**, 9:30 – 11 a.m., **Georgia World Congress Center**. www.gwcc.com

PFLAG hosts its **Big Day Out! Family picnic**, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m., **Glenlake Park Pavilion,** www.pflagatlanta.com

As part of **Atlanta Pride's 2013 Stride Into Pride Cultural** celebrations, **Charis** welcomes authors **Julie Marie Wade**, **Sassafras Lowrey**, and **Alysia Angel** for **"The Tears on Her Face are From Laughter: Queer Stories of Survival,"** an evening of storytelling, poetry, and tales of queer triumph, 7:30 p.m., Charis Books, www.charisbooksandmore.com

The bears are out tonight! **Bearracuda** returns to Atlanta with **DJ HiFi Sean**, 9 p.m – 3 a.m., **Heretic**, www.atlantaheretic.com

SUNDAY, OCT. 6

The 8th Annual Field of Greens Festival, Georgia's sustainable farming fair, is today with a vendor's market, local music, chefs and crafts, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at **Walnut Grove's Whippoorwill Hollow Farm**, www.fieldofgreensfestival.com

The **Historic Oakland Foundation** present the 34th annual **Sunday in the Park** event, with fun, food and entertainment for all ages, from 12 –6 p.m, **Oakland Cemetery,** www.oaklandcemetery.com

F.R.O.G.S. Cantina hosts a **Beer Bust** to raise money for the **Phillip Rush Center** expansion, 3 – 6 p.m., F.R.O.G.S., www.frogsmidtown.com

MONDAY, OCT. 7

Blue Monday Karaoke with **Angelica D'Paige** raises the roof at 11:30 p.m., **Burkhart's**, www.burkharts.com

TUESDAY, OCT. 8

Amsterdam Atlanta hosts its weekly **Show-tunes night** out beginning at 9 p.m., **Amsterdam Atlanta**, www.amsterdamatlanta.com

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 9

PALS Atlanta presents **Bingo** at 7:30 p.m. at **Jungle Atlanta**, www.jungleatl.com

My Sister's Room hosts its **Pre-Pride kick off/ dance party**, 8 p.m. – 3 a.m., www.mysistersroom.com

THURSDAY, OCT. 10

From gay director **Brian Clowdus** comes the new **"The Sleepy Hollow Experience,"** 8 p.m., **Serenbe Playhouse**, www.serenbeplayhouse.com

It's **Ladies Night** at **Friends on Ponce**, with your host **Regina**, beginning at 8 p.m., Friends on Ponce, www.friendsonponce-atl.com

Out On Film 26 closes with a screening of the award-winning documentary **"Bridegroom,"** featuring an appearance by the film's star, **Shane Bitney Crone**, at 8:30 p.m., www.outonfilm.org

Tempt Me Thursdays from 11 p.m. to 4 a.m at **Phase One**, *www.wassupnatl.com*

UPCOMING

FRIDAY, OCT. 11

The **Official Atlanta Pride Kickoff party** is tonight at the **Georgia Aquarium**, with **DJs Vicki Powell** and **Chris Griswold**, 7 – 11:30 p.m., www.georgiaaquarium.org

SATURDAY, OCT. 12

Atlanta Pride begins with activities all weekend, www.atlantapride.org

As part of the **Atlanta 2013 LGBA Conference, Atlanta Freedom Bands** presents **"Color Our World: Life, Spirit, Magic!,"** with special guest Topher Payne, from 8 – 10 p.m. at the **Ferst Center for the Arts**, www.ferstcenter.gatech.edu

DJ Tony Moran is in the house for **Atlanta's Best Dance Party- Pride Edition**, 9 p.m. - 3 a.m., **Jungle Atlanta**, www.jungleatl.com

MONDAY, OCT. 14

Legendary writer **Erica Jong** celebrates 40 years of **"Fear of Flying,"** published in 1973, with a local appearance, presented by the **Georgia Center for the Book** at the Jimmy Carter Library of the Carter Center, 7 p.m., www.cartercenter.org

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

Event spotlight

SATURDAY, OCT. 12

Funny woman **Wanda Sykes** brings her sly humor to town tonight at 8 p.m., **Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre**, www.

SATURDAY, OCT. 19

Pop singer, songwriter and musician **Todd Carey** kicks off his **"8 Bit Heartbeat"** U.S. tour with a headlining show tonight at 8 p.m. at Atlanta's **Smith's Olde Bar**, www.smithsoldebar.com

TUESDAY, OCT. 22

LGBT friendly recording artist **Jesse Ware** brings her melancholy vocals to **Center Stage** tonight beginning at 8 p.m., www.centerstage-atlanta.com

BEST BETS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

TUESDAY, OCT. 15

The gay friendly **Noah & the Whale** play **Variety Playhouse** at 8 p.m., www.variety-playhouse.com

Aaron Carter performs at 8:30 p.m. at **Buckhead Theatre**, www.thebuckheadtheatre.com

THURSDAY, OCT. 17 – 19

The first ever **LGBT social media conference salon** convenes in the ATL, with a number of national speakers and presenters, www.salonlgbtq.com

Family Equality Council, the nation's leading advocate for LGBT parents, hosts a reception to learn more about efforts to achieve full equality for our families- especially in light of the Supreme Court's decision this summer to strike down the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), 5 - 7 pm, **No Mas Cantina**, www.NoMasAtlanta.com

AEN hosts its **Third Thursday Networking** at 6:30 p.m. at the **Georgian Terrace Hotel**, www.thegeorgianterrace.com

SATURDAY, OCT. 19

Festival on Ponce's fall arts and crafts festival is this weekend at **Olmsted Linear Park,** www.festivalonponce.com

Atlanta Contemporary Art Center brings back **Art Party: Nourish**, a multi-media event with art and entertainment, 7 p.m. – midnight, www.thecontemporary.org/artparty

THURSDAY, OCT. 24

The **Restorative Justice Center of Atlanta** host the first annual **"Diamond on the Half Shell" Benefit** at the **Atlanta City Hall Atrium** from 6 - 9 p.m., with actress **Jasmine Guy**, www.restorativejusticecenter.org

FRIDAY, OCT. 25

The **Atlanta Lyric Theatre** opens the classic musical **"Guys and Dolls"** with some openly gay cast members, 8 p.m. at the Jennie T. Anderson Theatre at **Cobb Civic Center**. www.atlantalyrictheatre.com

Publicity photo via Facebook

SUNDAY, OCT. 20

Miss USA 2012 and **HIV/AIDS activist Nana Meriwether** joins **"American Idol finalist" RJ Helton** for the **23rd annual AIDS Walk** at **Piedmont Park**, www.aidswalkatlanta.com

SATURDAY, OCT. 26

The Lonely Forest, touring in support of their brand new album **"Adding Up The Wasted Hours,"** visits Atlanta to play at **Vinyl** at 8 p.m., www.centerstage-atlanta.com

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 30

The Los-Angeles based indie rock band **Sir Sly**, a favorite in the LGBT community, come to **The Earl** tonight at 8:30 p.m. www.badearl.com

NOV. 1 - 2

The 14th Annual RPC / CEF Creating Opportunity Conference, focusing on realistic solutions for moving the Southeastern region, and the nation, past its economic, educational, and social justice challenges. will be held this weekend at the **Hyatt Regency Atlanta**, www.rainbowpushatlanta.org.

NOV. 15

Sponsored by **Someone Cares Atlanta**, the **First Annual National Trans Health Symposium** - **"The Time Is Now!"** – takes place today at **The Loudermilk Center,** with speakers and panel discussions, www.someonecaresatl.org

OPINION BY MARK S. KING

The nexus of shame and shamelessness

When I was nine years old, I took my parents' album of the Broadway musical "Damn Yankees" and memorized every syllable of Gwen Verdon's show stopper, "Who's Got the Pain When They Do the Mambo?" Once I was satisfied with my lip-synching and choreography (I decided that a mambo was a dance in which young boys gyrated and flung themselves on and off the living room sofa), the number was ready for public display.

Mark S. King (Publicity photo)

The premiere was a simple affair, exclusive and unannounced. Mrs. May from across the street had stopped in for afternoon coffee, and opportunity knocked when Mother busied herself in the kitchen for a few minutes.

"Mrs. May, would you like to see me do a song?" The unsuspecting woman gave a polite "yes, that sounds nice" and before Mother could run interference I had turned on the stereo and dropped the needle at the precise moment where Gwen breaks into song.

Mrs. May stared and stared, her hands folded neatly in her lap, as I brought out every sashay, twist and thrust in my dancing arsenal. My moves may have been imperfect but I vocalized brilliantly, thanks to Gwen. As I struck my final pose, arms reaching for the heavens, frozen and triumphant, I saw mother standing in the doorway, holding a plate of cookies and breathing heavily through her nostrils.

It is that boy, the cheerful but feminine performer, that I always feared would creep out of me as I navigated young adulthood as a gay man.

And then, a lifetime later, as I worked for an AIDS agency in Atlanta in the 1990s, destiny called. An upcoming drag contest to benefit our agency was suffering from poor participation, and my boss asked if I would consider entering.

Being a drag queen, even for a night, terrified and delighted me. But the performer in me won out, wouldn't you know, and Anita Mann was born. I created an interactive video rendition of Donna Summer's "This Time I Know It's for Real" and won the contest.

Soon I was performing with a group known as "the camp drag queens of the south," The Armorettes, who hosted a Sunday night show at Atlanta's now-demolished Armory to raise funds for AIDS organizations (they are still performing, now at Burkhart's on Sundays at 8 p.m.)

Over the years they have raised over $3 million dollars, and their shows have been hugely successful every week. But my own phobic notions lingered.

I didn't want to be known as a drag queen ("It's comedy! I'm a performance artist!" I would insist). I never appeared anywhere in drag but on that stage – I would always get dressed at the show, and was out of drag for the final curtain call, in a bid to display whatever masculine credentials I had to offer.

I would hear other gay men make disparaging remarks about drag and I withered, unable to admit I was playing to a packed room every Sunday.

The nexus of shame and shamelessness is a complicated one. Each week I put on full display the very things about myself that I had worked so hard to reject — my femininity, my silly pursuit of acceptance through laughter and applause. And just as I gained confidence in what I was doing and why, I would lose a potential boyfriend when he learned of my weekend talents.

As a growing meth addiction encroached on my free time, I abandoned Anita Mann to its demands. Anita's dress and wig would be relegated to a duffel bag hidden in the back of the hallway closet. I had found a vocation in drugs that offered twice the shame and every bit of the need to keep quiet about it.

It took a few years before Anita would make her comeback. Armed with a TV set and a sense of the absurd, Anita performed at a sober fund raising event. Her rendition of "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" grows more insane by the moment.

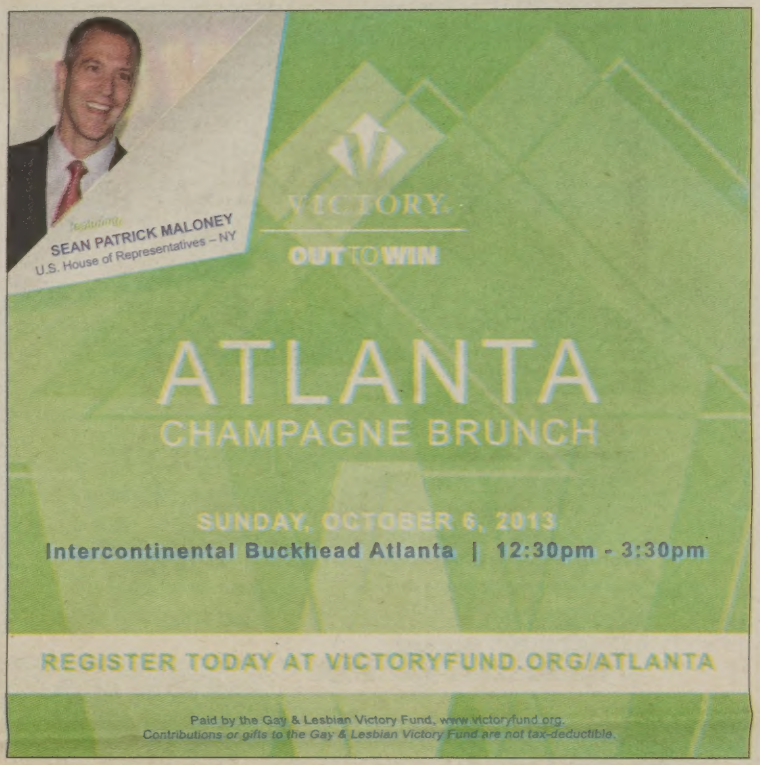
And yes, I am aware that I speak of her in the third person. Maybe it is because I view her as a character I have created, and perhaps it is the remnants of shame, and of my need to keep her at a distance.

It's strange, how those things that we have drawn the most shame from are also able to liberate us, and to help others. My HIV status. My drug addiction and recovery process. My drag personality. As I have embraced each of these, I've found self-acceptance and a way to carry a message of hope, and even joy, to others.

Meanwhile, I still struggle with the need to project as much masculinity as I can muster. I swagger more than I sashay. I sport a beard when possible. And I work to maintain a strict gym regimen.

It's important for me to stay in shape if I expect to fit in that dress.

Mark S. King is an award winning columnist, author, blogger (creator of the ongoing blog "My Fabulous Disease") and AIDS advocate who has been involved in gay causes since testing HIV positive in 1985, when the HIV antibody test first became publicly available. Read more of his work at www.marksking.com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MELISSA CARTER

THAT'S WHAT SHE SAID

Double standards

Melissa Carter is also co-anchor of the morning show on B98 and a writer for Huffington Post. She broke ground as the first out lesbian radio personality on a major station in Atlanta and is one of the few out morning show personalities in the country. Follow her on Twitter @MelissaCarter

We have spent the past few weeks analyzing the downfall of Miley Cyrus, after her performance at the MTV Video Music Awards. Her ever present tongue, affinity for foam fingers, and nude riding skills on a wrecking ball has prompted commentary on how women should act in order to be considered a role model.

But what about men? Even though they seem to stay fully dressed in public while women like Miley are barely clothed, men are skipping the foreplay and literally comparing their relationships to the mating rituals of gorillas. And where is the backlash against Bruno?

There was backlash at a middle school in North Carolina, but not for Bruno. Administrators there weren't offended by sexually explicit lyrics. Instead they were up in arms over a love song about same-sex couples. A social studies teacher at West Alexander Middle School in Taylorsville, N.C., was recently suspended for showing his 8th grade students the video "Same Love" by Mackelmore and Lewis. Superintendent Jeff Peal told a local paper that it was "inappropriate" for the teacher to show the video to the students.

"At West Alexander Middle School, there was an inappropriate video shown in class, outside the bounds of the curriculum that called for disciplinary action last week," he said.

An attorney for the school board said officials believed the video was unfitting for a middle school classroom.

Everyone has her/his own musical taste, but if a video by Miley Cyrus is ripped apart, so should one by Robin Thicke. If Eminem can talk about violence against women, Rihanna should be able to talk about S&M freely. And when there is public commentary about who our children should be looking up to, let's be fair about who we criticize.

Just for the record, I have never been accused of being a prude. I rarely complain about the lyrics of a song based on their crassness. But something about Bruno Mars' new single pushed me over the edge.

I was driving home one afternoon flipping channels on the radio, and came across Bruno singing "Gorilla" for the first time. The lyrics caused me to literally look at the radio dial and give a slight turn of my head, much like my Goldendoodle does when she hears a high pitched sound or is generally confused by something. Maybe it was Mars' soulful delivery that had me expecting some kind of romantic message. But romance was not on his mind when he belted out:

I got a body full of liquor with a cocaine kicker and I'm feeling like I'm thirty feet tall, So lay it down, lay it down, You got your legs up in the sky with the devil in your eyes, Let me hear you say you want it all, Say it now, say it now.

Okay. I get the fact when comparing this to, say, Prince singing about Darling Nikki or The Divinyls talking about touching themselves, this current song is not groundbreaking. But it is the chorus that reached a new level for mainstream radio that was shocking even to me:

You'll be banging on my chest, Bang bang, gorilla. You and me baby making love like gorillas, You and me baby making love like gorillas.

Gorillas? Really? That's the point where I turned the station, but had I stayed with Bruno this is what I would have heard:

*Yeah I got a fistful of your hair, But you don't look like you're scared, You're just smiling tell me daddy it's yours, 'Cause you know how I like it you's a dirty little lover, If the neighbors call the cops, call the sheriff, call the SWAT, We don't stop, we keep rocking while they knocking on our door, And you're screaming give it to me baby, Give it to me, motherf*cker.*

Put aside the crassness of the lyrics for a moment. There is a bigger issue here. The double standard of sexual expression in music is being communicated in huge bright flashing neon.

TOPHER PAYNE

DOMESTICALLY DISTURBED

Welcome to the Club

Topher Payne is an Atlanta-based playwright, and the author of the book "Necessary Luxuries: Notes on a Semi-Fabulous Life." Find out more at www.topherpayne.com

This morning I was looking for our dental insurance card in Preppy's wallet, and rediscovered something I'd forgotten, something that filled me with great joy: he has a Sam's Club card. In addition to my husbands' love and health insurance, my marriage entitles me to access to the land of bulk discount transcendence.

I don't know why we haven't taken advantage of this more often. I love bulk shopping. I could be buying boxes of two thousand Otter Pops. I don't currently eat Otter Pops, but I think if I had a whole bunch, I would.

Before I moved to Atlanta, I spent a summer in Gainesville, Fla., working as an intern. Internships, for the uninitiated, are a clever little ruse used by companies as a legal form of slavery. In exchange for a room and $119 a week, I was expected to be on call 24/7, as the company demanded. They say it's a learning experience, and there is truth in that: I learned a myriad of preparations for Ramen Noodles, and that Country Time Lemonade is a great mixer for cheap vodka.

On the upside, I wasn't alone in my indentured servitude. Another intern arrived a month after me, and I was assigned the task of driving to Orlando to fetch him.

He was from some tiny British hamlet with cobblestone streets and Ye Olde Taverns on every corner. His name was something unbearably English, like Beverly or Scone or something. And I was the first American he'd ever met. I'd never represented my countrymen in such a manner. I wanted to make a good first impression, so I did what my mother would do. I baked cookies.

He sat silently in the car, taking in the sights and munching on the cookies as I drove up the Interstate.

"There's too much butter in these cookies," he said at last.

And here, we had our first example of a cultural difference. In his tiny Dickensian hamlet, this was likely considered an act of charity: Informing the person who prepared your food how they might improve it to your liking in the future.

But in the American South, critiquing a gift is completely unacceptable, even if it brings out painful memories or an allergic reaction of some kind. I tried to figure out how to put that tactfully, to save him future embarrassment.

"How do I open this window? Your car positively reeks of cigarettes."

Or, perhaps this guy was just a jerk.

Playing the radio led to a diatribe on the inferiority of American pop music, with the apparent exception of Tina Turner, whom he adored.

"But she hates America, you know," Beverly Scone informed me. "She says it in all her European concerts, so Americans don't know about it. You Americans think you know everything that's going on in the world, but you don't."

I was really starting to despise Beverly Scone, which was clearly just fine with him, as he had arrived fully prepared to despise America. We spent the next three hours in the car, arguing over the warped picture of our country he'd apparently derived from watching "Baywatch", "ER", and "The X Files".

He asked how many guns I owned, if any of my friends' parents were still married, if I used drugs, and if I was a homosexual. The gay question (which I figured was answered when I baked cookies for the bastard), was the result of his uncle and aunt visiting New York once and stumbling upon Gay Pride. I concede that must have been a startling experience.

Back in Gainesville, I had to make a stop at Sam's Club to pick up supplies for our employer. And as Beverly stood in the grocery section of Sam's, staring at the boxes of five hundred frozen cream puffs and thirty pounds of Colby-Jack cheese cubes, he was overcome. It was like Jodie Foster in "Contact," you know? "No words, so beautiful..."

I saw an expression of awe spread across Beverly Scone's face, as he realized that should he ever want to fill the trunk of his car with mashed potatoes, or make sausage patties for his entire village, this country has a place where you can make that happen. It made me feel patriotic. America: We never, ever fail at excess.

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